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STATE TO BEGIN TESTS ON PLYMOUTH ROCK PORTICO FOR DESIGN PHASE OF PORTICO REHABILITATION PROJECT

Plymouth Rock Portico to Close for One Week Starting March 19

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) today announced plans to begin testing and analysis work on Monday, March 19, at the historic Plymouth Rock Portico within Pilgrim Memorial State Park on Water Street in Plymouth. The work is part of the design phase of the Plymouth Rock Portico Rehabilitation Project. The Portico and Plymouth Rock, which it protects, are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Testing is expected to last approximately one week. To ensure public safety, the Portico will be closed while the work is being done.

"The repair of the Plymouth Rock Portico is a priority for DCR," said DCR Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis. "The testing and design work is the first step in the rehabilitation of this national treasure."

During the testing, a small amount of mortar will be removed from the ceiling to expose the interior steel support beams, and three test areas will be opened on the roof. The beams will be tested and results analyzed to determine the scope of the repair work, which will be incorporated into the final design documents.

For several years, water seeping through deteriorating mortar joints in the Portico caused the steel beams to rust and expand. The water and resulting rust have caused the dome tiles to stain, separate, and detach. Rehabilitation of the Portico will involve repairing past damage from water infiltration, stopping current deterioration, and preventing future damage to the structure. Work will include exterior cleaning, mortar repairs, cleaning rust from interior steel, and replacing the terra cotta ceiling tiles. The result will be a more stable, but visibly unchanged, Portico.

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As an added precaution, DCR is considering installing a state-of-the-art rust-prevention system called "cathodic protection" (CP). CP involves the application of a safe, mild, electrical current to the structural steel, which halts the chemical process that causes oxidization (rust). This method has proven effective in protecting pipelines and ships, but is a relatively new method of preventing the deterioration of historic structures in Europe and the United States. Testing will determine the best way to apply the CP technology at the Portico. The CP testing work also will be done the week of March 19 while the Portico is closed.

The entire design phase of the project will cost approximately \$50,000, and is expected to be complete by June 1. DCR has contracted with Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype (BH+A) of Boston to lead the design effort.

Plymouth Rock and other nearby sites, such as the *Mayflower II* and Plimoth Plantation, are among the most popular tourist destinations in Massachusetts, attracting more than a million visitors annually. The work has been scheduled for a traditionally low visitation period.

The Plymouth Rock Portico, a Neo-Classical Revival structure, was built in 1921 to shelter Plymouth Rock and was designed by the influential architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White.

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